

SAPC - 18215  
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6 August 1957

MEMORANDUM FOR: Project Director

THROUGH : Deputy Project Director

SUBJECT : Proposed Cover Modifications

REFERENCE : SAPC-17(7) dated 26 July 1957, same subject.

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1. I have held the referenced memorandum written several weeks ago [redacted] since I felt that it recommended a step which should be given complete and thorough consideration. I should like to point out that the idea herein stemmed from a suggestion which I made [redacted] immediately following the untimely release in the RAF Flying Review, to which he makes reference in paragraph 1 of his memorandum.

2. On the balance, I am inclined to believe that while having a considerable value in theory, a move of this sort where we announce a capability for the U-2 aircraft in excess of the original figure but less than our known capability would ultimately involve us in a series of inquiries which would be difficult to handle without giving away the fact that our capability was in excess of the announced "record altitude figure".

3. I have come to this conclusion on several grounds, the least of which is that we have already one instance on record where Mr. Clarence L. Johnson, of Lockheed Aircraft Corporation, has stated an exact capability of 70,000 feet to one or more persons at the Lewis Flight Propulsion Laboratory of NACA in Cleveland. Now, if Mr. Johnson subsequently makes public announcement of the capability less than he has already freely discussed, we may be putting him in an embarrassing position since there is enough difference between the projected altitude record figure and the actual altitude to make Mr. Johnson appear somewhat less than truthful.

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4. While it is true, [redacted] points out, that almost every article of uncontrolled publicity regarding the U-2 aircraft has stated our altitude capability as "in excess of 55,000 feet" or "approximately 65,000 feet", this can still be classified as speculation since we have neither denied or refuted these allegations. The real merit of this proposal, as I see it, is that if we could predict the reaction we would elicit from friendly sources, and if we could control these reactions by releasing a capability less than our true figure but greater than the originally announced figure,

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it would perhaps serve as a temporary "red herring" which might confuse the opposition to a certain desirable extent. However, if the tracking of our aircraft is as good as some sources have indicated, the true character of our ploy would be known in the headquarters of the Russian Defense Command which, after all, is the only opposition activity we are basically attempting to defraud.

5. Accordingly, in my present frame of mind, I would suggest that we carry this matter no further without a thorough investigation of the benefits we hope to derive versus the liability we may unwittingly occur through its adoption. I, of course, believe that Mr. Johnson should be one of the first persons consulted in the event it is deemed desirable to carry the matter this far.

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[REDACTED]  
Project Director of Administration  
PCS/DCI

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